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Burma News

At Christmastime

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Baby Jesus, BORN a Saviour
Sleeping in your bed of hay,
May we feel Thee very near us.
On this Blessed Christmas Day.

DYING Saviour, Calvary's Martyr
On the Cross for you and me
Draw us very near Thy Great Heart,
Broken for us on the tree.

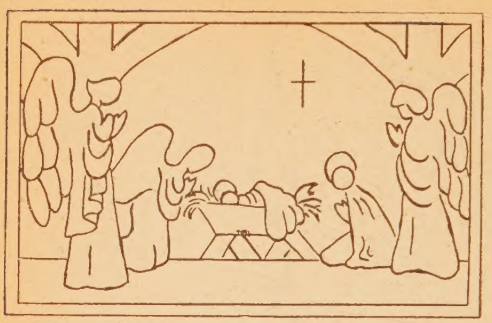
RISEN Saviour, Joy of Easter
For our world the only Hope,
Give us Courage; Keep us Loving,
While in darkness here we grope.

Christ our Lord on HIGH ASCENDED
On the Right Hand of our King,
All we have and all we hope for,
Joyous OFFERING, now we bring.

"Oh come, Let us ADORE HIM,
CHRIST the LORD."

—L. B. Hughes.

Miss Lizbeth Hughes, American Baptist Missionary in Moulmein and Taungyi, Burma from 1896 to 1947, is retired and living in her own home, RockBound, at Taungyi. On August 6 she was 92 years old.



NATIVITY PLAY A

THE play director stepped out from behind the bamboo matting manger scene to greet his visitor. Bits of straw from the manger clung to his hair and there were traces of silver dust across his shirt. "I'm Lieutenant Gabriel from the 104th Infantry," said the military young man. "We want to put on a Christmas program. We have a lot of Chin and Kachin Christians in our unit. I wonder if you could come out and put on your Christmas play for us."

The director sighed, thinking over the packed Christmas schedule. The Immanuel young people were taking part in two different plays, some of them. And most of them were in the Christmas Cantata as well. How to juggle all those rehearsals, plus nights to show the plays and lug scenery around town.... December 19th? Possibly that could be fitted in. The army would send trucks and bring the scenery. It would take a gang of fellows though to set up the stage. At least the army would do things up in good style: big outdoor stage, lots of lights and a good switch-board and loud-speakers. Several hundred non-Christians in that unit who probably had never seen a Christian Nativity Play before. And the Army was offering dinner as well.

"O. K." said the director. "I guess we can fit it in. It will be fun to be able to share with all those army men and families." He looked at the retreating figure of the Lieutenant. An Anglican, he was—well educated—recently back from special training in England. How nice of him to want to give a Christmas program to his men. The director felt a surge of Christmas spirit as he turned back to the stars still to be pasted in the purple heavens.

How we got it all done, no one ever knew. There was one elaborate Christmas drama held in the barrister's front yard, written and directed by his son, just back from Yale — an art major. It had modernistic scenery and some

IMMANUEL CHURCH

Immanuel Baptist Church, in downtown Rangoon, serves four congregations with different languages, including the English speaking group whose pastor is missionary Rev. R. Brown.

by Russell Brown

interesting original music. There was a large crowd of invited guests and an equally large group of interested neighbours hanging on at the edges. Afterwards a delicious meal served on the floodlit lawn in the cool fragrant December air.

There was an equally interesting evening when we went down into a crowded housing area to put on our church Nativity play in the recently opened Christian Center. The quarters were cramped but the enthusiasm and the singing were thrilling. I stood at the back of the hall. Nearby a tiny Burmese boy was sobbing because he couldn't see. He was too short. His older sister gave him a whack to make him keep still. But it didn't help at all. I reached over and picked him up and held him, pantless as he was, up on my shoulder and pointed out what he was supposed to be looking at amid the bewildering confusion of people sitting and standing, and the lights and darkness. Half of the time he looked at the stage and half the time he just stared at me in wonderment. He had never been held by the likes of me before.

Then came the 19th of December and our trip to the 104th Infantry barracks. We loaded our scenery and all the properties we could muster, into the army trucks. Our canvas flats about four years old, were showing signs of wear close up, but still looked magnificent if you were far enough away. The army really did do things up proper. We took our whole church choir along to hold up our end of things, Just as we were boarding army trucks to leave the church for the performance, two sailors from the ships wandered by and looked curious. They were German boys and knew only about five words of English. We invited them to come along. They agreed but said they must get back to the ship by midnight. "Oh, sure", I said. "We'll be back long before that." So off we went. Well, the dinner was delicious. Rice and several kinds of meat, vegetables

and salads. But there was a program ahead and a tremendous crowd had gathered. We had song sheets to sing by, but we judged most of the soldiers either didn't read Burmese, or weren't Christians, or else the lights were too dim to read by, because they didn't sing very well. Our auditorium was a big open drill field and there was a beautiful starlit sky overhead. The air was cool and crisp.

We tried our best to suggest the meaning and mystery of Christ's birth, but it is a mighty thing to portray and we wondered how much it did speak to the minds of the many non-Christians there. Anyway, we did what we could and every one of our group felt the thrill of it and put themselves fully into it.

After the performance there was coffee waiting for us and music and more singing, and it began to grow late. The Lieutenant explained that a detachment was being called out for action and there was no transport available for us at the moment. It was a discordant note in the midst of Christmas festivity to realize that somewhere out in the blackness fighting was going on and villages were being burned.

Time began to drag on. Some private cars left, but no one going to town. The two German boys were consulting their watches nervously. We said we would get them on the first truck going to town. Off they went finally, the truckload shouting, singing, full of excitement—the two German boys in the rear. I didn't see that truck race to town but those army trucks can really drive at night. I was told that minutes short of the deadline, the German boys leaped from the truck at the jetty and waved their goodbyes. We would never see them again. We wondered what that night had meant to them, and if the Christmas story was as new to them as it was to many of the Chin and Kachin soldiers in that audience.

Everything was anti-climax after that night. No one caught pneumonia from the night air. The cantata at church went well and the church was packed, as it was again on Christmas morning, and again for the Watchnight Candlelight Service New Year's Eve.

Oh yes, we had our Sunday School White Gifts and sent out our baskets to some 30 shut-ins and needy families. When Becky and I got home after the children's Christmas parties at the church and thought about Christmas at home, we didn't have much energy left. We pulled out our little imitation fireplace made out of wooden packing boxes and red crepe paper. We put our precious string of Christmas tree lights on the little potted evergreen tree, and our children hung their stockings in front of the electric light bulb fire in the crepe paper

fire place.

Burma Christians don't give much by way of Christmas presents, and our children had not developed great expectations either. A few nuts and candies in the stocking, a box of crayons and coloring book, a model airplane for Larry, a few games and books would be quite enough for a Christmas of fun and joy for the children. I just hadn't had time to get that gift I wanted for Becky. But then I was sure that she hadn't had time to make that new shirt for me. But at least it was Christmas and we were together and would be singing carols in our family circle after all the church activities were over. What more could one want to do or have on the day of Christ's birth?

There was one thing more though—sometime before the great day was over I opened my filing folder marked "Christmas" and put in a note: "Next year, start earlier to rehearse, do everything in Burmese languge and costume so they'll be sure to understand—Christmas is a wonderful time to share with others the story of Jesus,"

CHRISTMAS FOR THE COMMUNITY IN NORTH CENTRAL BURMA

by Marion Hackett

IN the Pa-o villages of the Southern Shan State, and in some of the hill Karen villages of Kayah, individual Christmas gifts are seldom given. Instead, each village works as a unit to give to its non-Christian neighbours the most precious Christmas gift imaginable, the knowledge of the Lord Jesus and his Kingdom.

Plans are being made for weeks ahead of time. Different villages select different dates, just before and after Christmas, so that those energetic souls who wish to attend *all* the celebrations may do so. The elder selected by the church to collect donations from the members to finance the celebration brings out his record book. From then on, he makes announcements from time to time, to the effect that more money will be needed. There are long discussions as to a suitable menu for the Christmas feast: above all, it must be plentiful, for if the food should run short, the disgrace would be almost more than the village could bear. Some of the women unpack and refurbish last year's Christmas decorations. Others drill the children on the Bible verses and songs, and perhaps even skits which will be their contribution to the program. Choirs rehearse for hours on end, until the whole village is humming Christmas carols and anthems. As the great day approaches, the men knock up a temporary pavilion of bamboo and grass, large enough to keep the sun off several hundred people. Finally they spread straw from their recently harvested rice on the ground for comfortable sitting, and the women move in with crepe paper streamers, flowers, and branches of pine and poinsettia. The pastors, meanwhile, have decided in conference who will preach on what aspect of the Christmas story, and have spent much time and effort working out sermons which are timely, evangelistic, and vividly interesting. It takes a first-rate preacher to hold the interest of a non-Christian crowd through a forty-five minute sermon. At last the invitations have gone out to all the neighboring villages. Long trench fires have been built, and are proudly presided over by specially talented men, whose prestige is greatly enhanced by this honor. The choirs are letter-perfect and so, right this minute, are the children.

About ten o'clock in the morning, the first guests begin to arrive. Christmas comes during cold season in our hills, and while it is possible to walk four or five miles barefoot through the frost, we

don't call it a celebration. By eleven the guests from the farthest villages have come. Recorded carols, or the efforts of one of the Christian Youth orchestras, can be heard from the pavilion. Gradually the crowds drift in; mothers settle their babies in the straw; older children demand, and get, an orange or a sweet, and subside; giggling little girls decide who can sit beside whom, and little boys punch each other and roll in the straw. Eventually we are ready to begin.

Now a Christmas celebration is not a thing to be hustled. The backbone of the program must be two or three or four sermons, interspersed by congregational singing and numerous anthems and prayers, perhaps a skit or two, and more orchestral selections. Any guest who is bored or weary, or whose children become obstreperous, is at liberty to wander out — and then wander in again later. Two hours, sometimes three hours or even longer, pass. The oldest pastor present is usually asked to pronounce the benediction.

In general, it is the custom to bolt food as rapidly as possible—but not at a Christmas celebration. If you eat slowly, you show respect to your hosts, and your food tastes better. Moreover you find you can eat even more than you thought you could! After the rice and curry and soup, bitter tea is served with salt—to be drunk slowly while one converses with one's friends—men in one group, women in another. The guests from the farthest village must leave first, for sunset comes early, and is followed immediately by dark and cold. Cousins from a nearby village may stay later, to wash dishes and take down the decorations and help eat up the leftovers.

There are, of course, endless variations on this pattern. In 1958, one village held its celebration in another village seven miles away, where there were only three Christian families. The extra work was enormous, of course, but they said the Christians would be encouraged and the Buddhists might be interested, and thus the work would be worthwhile. Another village presented a pageant, not of the Christmas story, but of different kinds of people whom Jesus helped—and can still help. And a third village served a completely vegetarian feast (though a feast without pork is practically a contradiction in terms hereabouts) so that even the strictest Buddhists could feel free to eat.

And do the results of this kind of Christmas celebration justify all the effort which goes into its preparation? We think so. Many a convert admits that he first became interested in Christianity when he was impressed by the

quality of the curry served at a Christmas celebration—so that he went back the next year, and listened more closely to the preaching. Moreover, this method of celebration indicates that the village people have an accurate idea of Christmas values and an appreciation of the Christmas spirit, and insures that children are being brought up to these values and in this spirit.

Christmas Card Prayer Reminders

Part of the joy of Christmas is fellowship with friends. We are very happy to receive many cards and letters from friends and relatives at Christmas time. A hurried glance at this expression of love does not seem adequate. So this year we have kept our stack of last year's cards beside our Bible and Secret Place. Every morning as we have our family devotions, we remember in prayer one friend whose name we read from the card which he has sent us. We like this custom and shall continue it. It helps the Christmas spirit of love to prevail throughout the year and keeps us feeling close to our friends, co-workers, and loved ones.

—*Eileen James.*

CHRISTMAS WITH THE CLASPERS

by Helen Clasper

Christmas in Burma is as exciting as Christmas in the USA. It is not as highly commercialized but preparation for each activity requires equal amounts of time and devotion. For us who are missionaries we must get out cards for America in the mail by October at the latest. Then we relax for a month or so before Christmas preparation starts in earnest again.

The simplicity and love behind gifts given to us has always been touching. Out of hearts overflowing with love and a desire to give, we receive three eggs or a dozen wrapped in newspaper, a hand of bananas from their own gardens. Some are a bit more artistic in wrapping such as the live chicken which arrived in a basket decorated with bits of crepe paper. Other gifts are oranges in a paper bag, Burmese sweets wrapped in a banana leaf, a bag of peanuts roasted with a bit of garlic, (Delicious! Try it !) or a small bag of rice-all gifts of love. You would have laughed as we did at the fat goose with the bow of red crepe paper around its neck which arrived too late for Christmas dinner. Turkey is almost prohibitive in price so the goose is a delicious substitute.

Our Christmas party for the students and teachers was held on the lawn beside our house. We ran extention cords from our house outside and hooked up lights around the yard. The Christmas tree was a big branch of a tamarind tree cut and planted in the ground then decorated with colored lights and colored balloons. We tied cord around the trees making a big circle and hung more colored balloons from the cord. We looked very festive and we had lots of fun with songs, games, good food and a movie on Boys' Town.

Throughout the evening and all night groups of carollers provide us with music Christmas week, so last year a group of missionary families (Claspers, Beavers, Schocks, and James) decided we would go caroling one evening. The men took their horns along which gave a variety to our singing. We were a lusty group with our songs and flashlights, as we traveled in our red pick up truck, visiting friends and shut-ins. It really was a high spot in our Christman season, a sharing experience for grown-ups as well as the children.

We all enjoy Christmas, even without the snow. Christ is real and His love is manifested in so many humble ways in the lives and activities of these, His people. You cannot help but see and feel Christ in Christmas.

Like the shepherds who made known abroad Christ's coming, so we celebrate

CHRISTMAS ON SEMINARY HILL

by Marion A. Beebe

We don't celebrate Christmas on Seminary Hill because Seminary Hill takes Christmas out to other places all over Burma. It has been the custom for many years for groups of students from the Bible Schools and seminaries to go out on what they term "evangelistic campaigns" at the Christmas season. These groups consist of from four to twelve students who go out to some village and from that village visit many other villages in that area. Usually they carry out their programs in anywhere from five to ten villages during the week or ten days of holiday.

Christmas then begins on Seminary Hill about the first of December when the groups are organized and begin preparations for going out. Usually each group prepares a dramatization of the Christmas story or some other religious dramatization. Then there are many Christmas songs to be practised to be sung at their public meetings.

Then each member of the group prepares a number of talks, testimonies or sermons for the public meetings and short devotional talks for the worship services to be held in the homes.

We do have some Christmas celebrations on the Hill before the teams go out. This past year the Divinity School had a big Christmas party out on the lawn. Lights were strung up around a circle of chairs, and a gayly decorated tree stood there with the presents the students and staff were giving each other. There was games and refreshments, a moving picture, the distribution of presents, and a worship service.

A day or two later the Karen Seminary, the Karen Bible School, and the Sunday School had their celebration in the Assembly Hall. The program consisted of items taken from those prepared by the groups plus some from the children's Sunday School. The hall was jammed with people from the Community behind the Hill. There were numbers of babies and small toddlers. After the program presents were shared and every child whether a stranger or not received a bag of sweets and nuts.

On the following day the students began to leave for their respective fields. Some went the night before to the railway station in Rangoon to be able to take the early morning train to Nyaunglebin, Shwegyin or Toungoo areas. Others left from Insein by morning train to Tharrawaddy and Henzada. Some went by bus and some by river steamers. Whatever way they travelled, most of them had to complete their journeys on foot along the embankments of the paddy fields.

One party of ten who went to an area in the Rangoon District reported that they visited a Shan village (Shans are usually found in the north in the Shan States). These Shans were Buddhists but there were five Christian Karen houses in the village, and the Karens had invited the group to come and help them give a suitable Christmas witness. The first night they gave what they term a "Concert", that is they sang their Christmas songs and hymns interspersed with the dramatization, their testimonies and exhortations. The next day they went around visiting in the homes. In the afternoon they gathered the children for games and sports, and taught them some songs. The teacher of the school who was a Buddhist seemed much pleased with what they did for the children.

In the days following the group visited four other villages repeating this program. Only one of these villages was a Christian village, but the non-Christians received them gladly and invited them into their homes to hold worship services.

Reports of the other groups were very similar in the general program. All of them visited more non-Christian villages than Christian. In all these villages they gave out the Christmas cards which have been sent to us from U.S.A. These cards are treasured by the children as mementoes of a wonderful experience in their lives. Often these Christian campaign

Luke 2:17

groups are so appreciated by the non-Christian villagers that they ask if a permanent worker cannot be sent to their village. When we are able to supply such a worker to carry on work throughout the year, we usually find that it is not long before we have the beginnings of a church there.

Our students see the importance of this work, and we find little thought of returning to their own homes to celebrate Christmas in the family circle. To those who live on Seminary Hill, Christmas is a time of opportunity to present to others the knowledge of the love of God who gave His great Gift, Jesus Christ, to mankind. Christmas, to our Seminary students is a sharing time, and so a happy time.

CHRISTMAS EVE AT OUR HOUSE

by Lloyd and Eileen James

CHRISTMAS in Burma is different than Christmas in America. We do not have the usual November signs of gaily decorated store windows, lighted streets, and "toytown" advertisements, nor do we have the snowy weather, to remind us that Christmas is in the air. Rather we see poinsettia shrubs blooming a brilliant red, and if we are near a church or school we hear Christmas carols being practised long and frequently. These only are the signs of Christmas, for gift giving is an insignificant part of the celebration in Burma.

Nevertheless our children remembered Christmas in the States the year before, and to American children, unfortunately, receiving gifts looms synonymous with the word, "Christmas", even though they know and understand that the day is to honor Jesus' birthday. We had prayed that our Christmas would be meaningful and not self-centered. We had been caught up in the whirl of school programs, church cantata, nativity plays, various worthwhile parties, and going out caroling. Now Christmas Eve had arrived. It was a time we could call our own. Christmas Day in Burma starts early with morning worship services in all the churches, and Lloyd was scheduled to preach at the Telegu Indian service at Immanuel. Christmas Eve this year happened to be free of responsibilities for us and we planned to enjoy it as a family evening. Boxes from grandparents in America had arrived days before. To the children all the glitter and anticipation of the American Christmas was represented in those boxes! David, Stephen, and Peter had looked forward to the time of their opening with great eagerness. After supper, we planned to open them.

Then the doorbell rang, and a "stranger" walked in. He was a young man who works as a clerk in one of the government offices down town. As Lloyd had frequented his office on mission business, he had made friends with him, and he had visited in our home occasionally on Sundays. Because he wondered about the festival of Christmas, he had chosen to come visit us on Christmas eve! Lloyd and I exchanged cautious glances. Our intimate family evening—the American Christmas—would not be possible. But could it be—was this young man's visit the answer to our prayer for a meaningful Christmas?

As we ate supper together, he noticed the plastic nativity scene which covered our buffet. Being a Buddhist, he did not know what the Christian observance of Christmas was about. It was a real joy to stand beside the tiny lighted manger, and explain, as best Lloyd could in halting Burmese, the nature and meaning of the coming of the Christ

Child. As Lloyd talked, Eileen prayed silently. We showed him our Christmas tree (a tropical casurina which somewhat resembles a pine) and explained our practice of exchanging gifts.

Then we went outside, where we had mounted outdoor decorations, to show him the lighted Wisemen on their way towards the Star, and explained that these were Oriental kings who were guided by a great sign to find this Child born in a manger.

After this, he expressed an interest in attending the Christmas service being held in the Karen church across the road from our house. It was getting late and going there meant we could not open the boxes together, nor would we have a "Daddy" in our family circle of prayers when the children went to bed. But if they went we knew the young man would hear the Christmas story in better Burmese than we had explained it and perhaps he would catch more meaning of what God's Son coming to the world meant. In this service they portrayed the Nativity in pageant and Scriptures.

As the children and mother spent the rest of the evening together alone, it was different than we had planned. We emptied the boxes and laid the packages around the tree to be opened early on Christmas Day. Receiving the gifts from America that night was not as important as telling the new friend about God's Gift of His Son to the world. As the children were tucked into their beds, mother and sons could still hear the voices and carols of the pageant across the street where father and the friend would stay for several hours. There was no resentment that we could not find time for a family evening at Christmas. Rather our hearts were full as we prayed that Christ's love could find its way to this young man's heart. We were all happy that God had sent him to us on Christmas eve, so that we could share the Gospel on this holy night with one who never before had heard it. This made the whole Christmas season especially meaningful to us all.

GIVING IS PART OF CHRISTMAS

White Gift Service

THE Sunday before Christmas, each year, the members and friends of the Burmese Baptist Church join in a lovely and meaningful service of special offering and worship. It might also be thought of as a service of dedication, as well. For in this way, the church is expressing its concern for and its support of the local agencies of Christian service and ministry in the community.

Thus, with careful preparation as to music and decoration, prayers, scripture, and preaching, we gather to bring our gifts of money, of food, of clothing or other small items. These gifts will later be distributed to the Susan Haswell Leprosy Home, or to the Baptist Home for Orphans, or to the Moulmein Christian Hospital. But there is deep meaning in the fact that we bring them first, and together, to the church.

It was partly the desire to inject a deeper spirit of reconsecration into the celebration of Christmas, that led to the establishment of this custom in this church. The pastor was concerned that any gift-giving connected with Christmas be consciously Christ-centered. He was also concerned that the custom, among his people, be such that poor as well as well-to-do, young as well as old, could participate with the same sense of joy and satisfaction, putting our attention away from the gifts themselves, and upon that One in whose spirit and in whose name all our giving is to be expressed.

And so, remembering how the Wise Men brought gifts to the Christ-child to express their recognition and adoration, we also bring gifts in his name. And conscious of the wonderful grace and purpose of God in sending his Son, we take this opportunity to show gratitude and praise by sharing, in love.

Preaching The Message Of Incarnation

Christmas comes at a cool and pleasant time of year, when school children are gathered handily, and when festive feelings are easily roused. However, it is not merely the festivity of Christmas which draws us together. It is even more the wonder of why and how God came—and comes—to us,

AT MOULMEIN

by Clay Erickson

which we try to express and share together. And so in this expression and sharing of the spiritual message of Christmas, Moulmein Baptists find a most opportune and fruitful means of showing and telling their Buddhist and Hindu and Moslem friends about Christ's coming, and about God's love.

Our Student Christian Union at the College has regularly made this the theme of their Christmas party or celebration, bringing together large numbers of their student and faculty friends for the occasion. Similarly, this is made a high point in the Sunday Schools held among non-Christian children by the various churches. Christians in the nearby Army camps, the leaders and staffs of Christian schools (and indeed, the Christian staff members of government schools in several cases), the Christian nurses in the government hospital as well as in our Christian hospital—all take this opportunity to dramatize and to explain the coming of Christ.

We need to be more faithful, of course, in this ministry. Perhaps more courageous. This year we experimented in the use of a new and attractive tract expressing the meaning of Christmas. Christian scriptural calendars are always welcome gifts among our non-Christian friends. And in socials at the YMCA-YWCA, carols are sung by all of us together. The occasional plays and cantatas are always well received by our Christian friends. And the questionable custom of exchanging Christmas cards spreads wider each year, also among the non-Christians. But all this should be viewed not as signs of achievement. No, it rather shows us that we have a way and a means of telling that Jesus Christ is born. We must hope and work and pray, that our words and our own lives might be such that the fire of faith and love be kindled in every heart around us, this Christmas and always.

CHRISTIANS IN NORTH BURMA CELEBRATE THE CHRIST CHILD'S BIRTH

by E. E. Sowards

THE Shweli River is a medium-sized river in northeastern Burma which for some distance forms part of the boundary between Burma and China. Here the stream tends to be broad and shallow and the valley wide and fertile, with terraced rice fields and thriving Shan villages. South of Namkham both valley and stream narrow between rocky hills as the Shweli flows on through Burma to join the Irrawaddy.

In this beautiful valley there are three Shan Baptist churches; the First Baptist Church of Namkham is the oldest and strongest; the church at Mu-se, about twenty miles up the river, now has a nice new building for which funds were collected over a period of nineteen years; in between is the smaller church in the village of Se-lan. In addition to supporting their own pastors, these three Shan churches have for years carried on a vigorous evangelistic work among their Shan and Chinese neighbors in the valley, and among the Palaungs, Lishaws, and Chinese in the bordering hills. Now a fourth Baptist church, composed of Lishaw and Chinese members, has been formed in the hills. More than one hundred Chinese familes in the valley and

neighboring hills are now Christian or definitely interested in Christianity.

There is a fine spirit of cooperation between the churches in the Shweli Valley, and one form this takes is in the annual combined observance of Christmas, each church taking its turn to entertain the whole group, and all contributing to the common effort. Non-Christian neighbors are invited in for various parts of the all-day celebration, and as many as 2,000 people may take part in the course of the day.

I have long wanted to attend a Christmas celebration in the Shweli Valley, and finally had this privilege in 1958. Dr. Ai Lun, the Superintendent of the Namkham Hospital and the lay leader of Baptist work in the Shweli Valley, was away as he was one of the Burma Christian Medical Council delegates attending a conference in Hong Kong. I was lodged in the Guest Room of the Hospital and was well cared for. I have long known the Seagrave family, and Dr. Seagrave went out of his way to see that nothing was lacking that the Hospital could provide for my comfort. Thus I had the advantage of being on hand to see and participate in the Christmas activities of the Hospital as well as those of the Shweli Valley churches.

The Hospital decorations for the season included green branches, colorful Christmas cards, bright paper streamers, and candles. On Christmas Eve there was a dinner to which local leaders were invited, followed by a concert given by the nurses. The nursing staff at the Namkham Hospital is composed of representatives of several different language groups of Burma, and there are Christians and non-Christians but all worked together harmoniously in presenting the annual Christmas concert. On the morning of Christmas Day a group of nurses went through the wards, singing carols and distributing gifts of candy, oranges, and peanuts to all impartially.

Up in the Shan village adjoining the Hospital grounds, men and women, boys and girls had been working together for days to complete the preparations for entertaining the hundreds of guests. It was interesting to watch the many activities going on, and the arrival of the folks from the other churches by various means of transport. Firewood had been gathered, cooking places dug for the great kettles, temporary tables and seats constructed from wood and bamboo, shelters made, and the "1001 things" necessary for the feeding and comfort of several hundred visitors was done by united effort and in a fine spirit of working together, the different age groups apparently having well-defined tasks in the common effort.

On Christmas Day I was given a rousing welcome when I arrived at the church grounds, walking between the hundreds of people drawn up in two groups on both sides of the walk from the entrance up to the church itself. A Christmas service was held in the church, with choirs from all the churches participating, including one from the new Chinese-Lishaw church. My part of the program was a brief talk on "The Real Meaning of Christmas," translated into Shan by a Karen worker who has been many years in the Shweli Valley. As a souvenir of the occasion, I was presented with a beautiful silver-mounted dah or sheathed knife, with an ivory handle, a fine example of the work of expert Shan silversmiths.

After the service we sat down to the community dinner to which many local people not connected with the church had been invited. There was an abundance of food for all, and the spirit of sharing—an essential part of the spirit of Christmas—was evident. About two hundred Lishaws were in attendance, and the colorful costumes of the Lishaw women were much in evidence, and added a bright note to the more somber costumes of the Shans. A real spirit of Christian fellowship which can overcome barriers of language, nationality, and different cultural backgrounds, was evident,—a sample of what the spirit of Christ can do toward solving the world's problems and relieving its tensions if only given a real trial. I shall always remember with gratitude my Christmas in the Shweli Valley, and repeatedly give thanks that there is such a vigorous Christian witness in that part of Burma.

A HAPPY DAY FOR THE REFUGEES

by Bertha Dickason

That little children far and near might laugh on Christmas day and all the year.

IN a very large refugee village in Rangoon, to which people had fled during Burma's civil war, the Burma Christian Council maintained a clinic. The workers there had not considered making Christmas for the more than 700 refugee children until Dr. Reginald Helferich of Church World Service left $100. for this purpose. Fourteen cents each to make seven hundred children happy on the day of Christ's birth! Nothing less than careful, prayerful planning would do!

The children lived in bamboo huts within the walls of a Buddhist monastery area. The B.C.C. clinic workers were well known to them as they had been the only source of medical care aside from the Burmese medicine men. Nothing like a Christmas party had ever happened there. The cooperation of the headman of the village was solicited, and he in turn asked the twenty subdivisional headmen to see that the children from their areas reached the hilltop behind the village at the appointed time.

The day arrived! The children streamed up to the hilltop where mats were spread and some twenty Christian women were singing Christmas carols. Bible women had set up flannelgraph pictures. There were piles of Christmas cards with nativity scenes, on the back of each of which was printed in Burmese, "From your friends in America who want you to know Jesus." The hilltop was closely packed and some of the bigger boys were up in the trees. Prayer, carols, the Christmas stories by flannelgraph, then the bags of goodies which had been carefully prepared, one for each child; and for the wee ones, a jacket or stuffed toy each. It was much fun for the givers as well as for the children.

Two weeks later the clinic workers, visiting homes of the sick, came across those nativity pictures

fastened to the mat walls of the houses. They asked a child here or there what the story of the picture was, and in every case the children knew and could tell the story.

Three years later—same place—same children only more—same workers with a few new ones.

It was three days before Christmas. As the clinic doctor, himself a new Christian, sat consulting with patients, he suddenly looked up and said to the nurse. "Are these children to have no Christmas this year?"

The nurse, startled, replied: "There is no plan; it is so soon; there's no money; these know nothing of Christmas." At this word, the doctor removed K 100 ($20) from his pocket, saying, "Please make Christmas for them." The nurse thought: "That little children far and near may laugh on Christmas day and all the year."

Now the workers in that clinic loved the children and their mothers, but they could not see how K 100 could possibly stretch to provide Christmas for so many. However, other gifts soon arrived —some from the Nurses' Fellowship, some from U.S.A. At the same time, a new plastic company with a Christian owner was discovered. Toys—beautiful, brightly colored toy motor cars, dolls, whistles, rattles, and combs—could be bought by the hundred. It was amazing how much could be had or so little. Of course, the kind owner reduced the price greatly for the sake of those refugee children.

Christmas morning at six, two cars packed and over flowing with teachers, high school girls, and plenty of toys, took off in the direction of the village. Experience had shown that some school-age children like to get in line twice, so all school children were seated in a large mat-sided school house. After teacher Stella Dawson had told them Christmas stories, the gifts were distributed. The teachers followed Jesus' precedent of keeping the crowd seated while the things were being passed out; no crowding, no confusion, and no seconds! When all had their gifts, they filed out of the school room. At the door was a basket of Indian sweets (Jalabies) which the kind doctor had sent, so to each child went a nice sticky jalabie. Happiness grinned through a sugary coating!

Meanwhile mothers with babies and pre-school children assembled in various sections of the village. A teacher and a high school girl went to each of these places with a basket of appropriate toys.

Days later, as nurses moved among the people, they saw firmly gripped in baby hands the Christmas rattles and dolls.

"Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these, ye did it unto me."

That children far and near, might laugh on Christmas day and all the year.

CHRISTMAS AT BAPTIST HEADQUARTERS IN RANGOON

by Lucy Wiatt

CHRISTMAS at Baptist Headquarters begins early in December, as the many children on our compound begin singing the Christmas songs and carols they have been learning at school. Of an evening, too, we hear various groups of young people practicing the Christmas music their choirs are preparing for the happy season.

Early in the month last year some of us began making lists of all the members of our Headquarters "family", which comprises the families of the workers in our many offices—Burma Baptist Convention, Burma Baptist Churches Union, Sgaw Karen Convention, Pwo Karen Conference, Burma Baptist Christian Endeavour Union, Publications Department, Christian Literature Society, Field Secretary's and Treasurer's offices, and the property maintenance crew. We visited in the homes, got the ages and measurements of the children, and brought our lists up to date by adding the new babies who had joined the family since last Christmas.

All through December the pace accelerates, culminating the week before Christmas in a succession of school and church programs, cantatas, and parties. In the midst of all this happy activity we tried to find time for the Christmas shopping, combing the bazaars for the little gifts that would add joy to the Christmas celebrations.

Spontaneous carolling begins several days before Christmas. Little groups of children from our Headquarters families, who love to sing the Christmas songs, come around from house to house in the early evening, carolling in their clear childish voices.

Our Headquarters party was held two or three days before Christmas, and the wide lawn beside the East Wing is an ideal place, with its "live" Christmas tree, planted several years ago by the Dickasons. Some of the children gathered to help us trim the tree with the colored paper chains, bits of tinsel, and bright Christmas cards saved from year to year. The children were drawn irresistibly to the tree whenever they were free all day long, and by the time the program actually started most of them had been ready for an hour or more, sitting and playing on the grass, and listening to the Christmas music on record player or tape recorder.

As the family gathered, they were a colorful picture, the Indian ladies in their soft saris, the Burmans and Karens in bright longyis. When all had come, there were 150 or more, counting the children, who make up at least half the total number.

The program included a short

worship service with a Christmas film or filmstrip, and songs and recitations by the children—Burman, Karen, Indian, and American. Then came the refreshments—tea, coffee, and cold drinks, with Christmas cookies and cakes, and a bag of sweets and an orange for each one. There was a balloon for each child, too, and some years we have blown these up ourselves beforehand (at considerable expenditure of breath) using them as decorations. Last year we hit on the bright idea of letting the children do their own blowing up, which kept them happily occupied during the serving of the refreshments and was so successful that it will probably become standard procedure hereafter.

Last of all was the distribution of gifts from the tree—some article of clothing for each one (and how grateful we are for the children's clothing in the White Cross boxes), and for every child some small toy or game. The party ended before dark, and the families made their way home, the children singing and laughing, and bobbing their bright ballooms.

Yes, Christmas is a joyous time at Headquarters especially because of the children, whose happiness is so uncomplicated and unalloyed, and who help to draw us closer to Him who said, "Let the little ones come to Me."

SHARE YOUR CHRISTMAS

Many people from Burma are in the States on scholarships and other services. Only recently we have bid farewell to Dr. Hla Bu and family as he left for a year at Union Seminary, New York, and his daughter left to enroll at Keuka College, New York. The next day friends said goodbye to Dr. Chit Maung (also going to Union Seminary), his daughter Naw Eh Wah, and Naw Sharo (sister of Saw Clifford) who are now students at Colgate Rochester Seminary. Travelling with them was Miss Florence Pu who has a scholarship to study music at Howard University. Peter Htwe Tin, son of S'mo Kha, has a scholarship at Johnson College, Charlotte, N. C. Philip Po Ba will attend Perkins Institute for the Blind at Watertown, Mass. Louisa Benson is going for college in U.S.A. also. Mrs. Emma Nyunt Han, daughter-in law of Dr. Ba Han, barrister, is in Washington D. C. along with Burma's delegation to the United Nations.

These have left recently and many more have gone there previously or will be going. These students will be spending Christmas in a new land far away from their families and familiar customs. Christmas is a good time to look up foreign students in your area through the offices of the colleges and share Christmas festivities with them. Their appreciation will not be greater than the joy you will receive for this friendliness.

A PLEA FOR PRAYER

One frosty night the Christ Child
Was born in a manger low,
And the Light that then was kindled
Is still in the world aglow.
The song then sung by angels
Is sung in the world today,
And its music down through the ages
Has led men to love and pray.
Yet now the world's disordered;
There's war, and sorrow, and pain;
Men grieve and grieve the Christ Child,
Forgetting His message and reign.
Dear friends of the Holy Christ Child:
On this Christmas Day so fair,
On bended knee before Him,
Oh, utter an earnest prayer
That Christians may follow the Christ Child,
That hatred and war may cease.
And Jesus may come in His glory
To give us eternal peace;
That Jew and Gentile may follow—
Nor suffer eternal loss,
And all the world may accept Him—
The Christ of the saving Cross.

—Mary L. Parish, Pegu, Burma

(Miss Parish, an American Baptist Missionary in Burma from 1907 until 1942 is retired and living at 2824 N. 66th Ave., Omaha, Nebraska.)

AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSIONARIES IN BURMA

INSEIN, Seminary Hill

Miss Marion Beebe
Dr. and Mrs. Paul Clasper
Miss Dorothy Rich

KENGTUNG, Shan States
Kengtung Christian Hospital

Dr. and Mrs. Keith Dahlberg
Miss M. B. (Peggy) Smith

KUTKAI, A.B.B. Mission
Northern Shan States,

Rev. and Mrs. D. M. Crider

MANDALAY, 82nd Street

Rev. and Mrs. L. A. Crain

MAYMYO, A.B.B. Mission

Miss Ecco Hunt
Rev. and Mrs. David Stimson

MOULMEIN, Christian Hospital

Dr. Dorothy Gates
Dr. Bina Sawyer

MOULMEIN

Rev. and Mrs. C. R. Erickson
No. 12 Mission Road
Miss M. E. Shivers
No. 11 Mission Road

MYITKYINA, A.B.B. Mission

Rev. and Mrs. H. G. Tegenfeldt
Miss Mary I. Laughlin

PANGWAI, via Loimwe P. O.
Eastern Shan States
Rev. and Mrs. P. W. Lewis

RANGOON, 143 St. John's Road

Miss Rebecca Anderson
Rev. and Mrs. R. W. Beaver
Rev. and Mrs. R. E. Brown
Rev. and Mrs. Milton Combs
Dr. and Mrs. F. G. Dickason
Rev. and Mrs. E. T. Fletcher
Rev. and Mrs. Lloyd James
Rev. and Mrs. Harold Schock
Miss Lucy F. Wiatt
Miss Mary Ellen Williams

SUMPRABUM, Kachin State

Miss Lucy Bonney

TAVOY, A.B.B. Mission
Rev. Walter Sutton

TOUNGOO, A.B.B. Mission
Miss Charity Carman

YEDWINYEGAN, Myaungmya
Miss Emilie Ballard

ON LEAVE IN THE U.S.A.

Dr. and Mrs. W. D. Hackett
Rev. and Mrs. R. G. Johnson
Miss Ruth Keyser
Miss Alice Mae Simmons
Rev. E. E. Sowards